

Housewife to stardom: Paro (1935) recalls

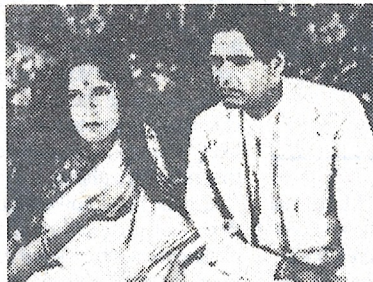
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

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The hazel-eyed 21st century Paro may have given the performance of a lifetime, but the 20th century original Devdas Paro has not seen it. Frail 82-year-old Jamuna Barua, has heard a lot about Sanjay Leela Bhansali's glittering opus, but says she is too old to watch movies now.

Debuting as Paro when she was just 16 back in 1935 for the Sarat Chandra classic in black-and-white, Jamuna quit the arclights and disappeared into the bylanes of Kolkata, till she was called upon to take her place on the stage at the inauguration of the Indian Retrospective at the 33rd India International Film Festival today.

In a tribute to all the Indian films adapted from the Bangla tome penned by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, the Retrospective sec-



A clipping from P.C. Barua's Devdas (1935); Jamuna Barua at the IFFI (right) — Express photo by sanjay Sharma

tion of the festival is showing all the five different versions of Devdas, beginning with the 1935 Bangla film directed by Jamuna Barua's husband, P.C. Barua.

Recalling how he had wooed her to do the role, Jamuna, who was then a young housewife, said she was quite unsure about what was expected of her. But after taking the plunge, she was ready to play Paro in the Hindi version of the film, starring K.L. Saigal.



Back in 1935, when Indian moviemaking was still evolving and pancake was unknown, Jamuna did all the shooting of the film outdoors. "Shooting indoors was difficult," recalled the saree-clad actress.

And for once, the Directorate of Film Festivals rose to the occasion by inviting all persons associated with the film. Also present was D.K. Sarkar, whose father, B.N. Sarkar, had produced the film after purchasing the rights of the movie for

New Theatres.

Sarkar junior recalled how Sarat Chandra had dissuaded his father from making the film. "It's not the best of my works," the novelist had said.

The producer quipped that he would transform it into a classic.

And the movie went on to become a hit. And when Sarat Chandra died, the cortege passed through Sarkar's house as per the last wish of the novelist.

The other four versions of Devdas to be screened at IFFI are the 1955 film by Bimal Roy, Devdasu of Vedantam Ragavaiah, another Telugu version directed by Vijaya Nirmala in 1974 and the latest glitzy version of 2002 directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali.

